

Message Text

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PAGE 01 CAIRO 03821 041514Z
ACTION SS-25

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C O N F I D E N T I A L CAIRO 3821

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: ENRG, PFOR, US, IS
SUBJECT: EGYPTIAN OIL CONCESSION IN SINAI BUFFER ZONE

REF: (A) CAIRO 3186, (B) CAIRO 3639 (NOTAL)

SUMMARY: ASKED IF GOE HAD QUERIED HIM RE CONOCO ACCESS TO ITS CONCESSION BLOC IN UNEF BUFFER ZONE, GENERAL SIILASVUO SAID NO. HOWEVER, EGYPTIANS HAD ABOUT A MONTH AGO RAISED A POSSIBLE SEISMIC SURVEY IN BAY OF TINA, ADJACENT TO BUFFER ZONE, AND IN INTERNATIONAL WATERS EAST OF THE ZONE. SIILASVUO INFORMED ISRAELIS, WHO HAVE GIVEN NO DEFINITIVE REPLY. INFORMALLY LEVINSON INDICATED GOI BELIEVES SUBJECT SHOULD BE DISCUSSED IN JOINT COMMISSION. MAGDUB DOES NOT WANT SUBJECT BROUGHT UP IN JC SINCE GOE REGARDS AREA IN QUESTION AS SOVEREIGN EGYPTIAN TERRITORY. SIILASVUO AGREED IT IS GOE RESPONSIBILITY ARRANGE ACCESS TO BUFFER ZONE BUFFER UNEF. IF GOE MAKES SUCH REQUEST IN BEHALF CONOCO, HE WILL ATAKE IT UP WITH ISRAELIS TO ASCERTAIN THEIR REACTION. END SUMMARY.

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1. GENERAL SIILASVUO CALLED TODAY ON AMBASSADOR, WHO BRIEFED HIM ON CONOCO QUERY (REF A) AND ON ADVICE GIVEN TO CONOCO THAT IT SHOULD INSIST GOE ARRANGE FOR ACCESS INTO BUFFER ZONE. AMBASSADOR QUERIED SIILASVUO RE ANY APPROACHES FROM GOE ON SUBJECT AND UNEF'S CURRENT POSITION ON ANY SUCH REQUEST.

2. SIILASVUO RECALLED THAT A YEAR OR MORE AGO EGYPTIANS GAVE HIM A MAP OF SINAI SHOWING VARIOUS MARKED BLOCS, SOME IN BUFFER ZONE, WHICH THEY PROPOSED TO LET OUT FOR CONCESSION. SIILASVUO GAVE COPY TO ISRAELIS, BUT HAS NEVER HAD ANY COMMENT OR REPLY. NOR DID EGYPTIANS APPRISE HIM ABOUT CONCESSIONS THEY HAVE GRANTED OR ARE GRANTING INSINAI. HE HAD HEAD ABOUT SUCH CONCESSIONS, BUT HARDEST INFORMATION WAS THAT WHICH WE HAD GIVEN HIM SOME MONTHS AGO (76 CAIRO 17644).

3. SIILASVUO CONTINUED THAT NIETHER GOE NOR ANY OTHER PARTY HAS APPROACHED UNEF RE CONOCO ACCESS TO ITS SINAI BLOCS. IN EARLY FEBRUARY, HOWEVER, ABOUT THE TIME WALHDEIM WAS IN THE AREA, GENERAL MAGDUB HAD APPROACHED HIM RE A PROPOSED SEISMIC SURVEY TO BE CONDUCTED IN MEDITERRANEAN WATERS, PARTLY IN BAY OF TINA ADJACENT TO THE BUFFER ZONE AND PARTLY EAST OF THE ZONE. AREAS TO BE COVERED EAST OF THE ZONE, SIILASVUO NOTED, WERE TO BE IN INTERNATIONAL WATERS. HE BELIEVES COMPANY INVOLVED IS ITALIAN.

4. SIILASVUO TOOK NOTE OF EGYPTIAN REQUEST AND, WHILE NOT SPECIFICALLY SO INDICATING, THOUGH EGYPTIANS UNDERSTOOD HE WOULD HAVE TO CHECK IT OUT WITH THE ISRAELIS. IN MENTIOING REQUEST TO LEVINSON, SIILASVUO SAID THE PROPOSED SEISMIC WORK IN OFF-SHORE AREAS EAST OF THE BUFFER ZONE IS NOT UNEF'S BUSINESS. SO FAR AS PROPOSED WORK IN THE BUFFER ZONE OFF-SHORE WATERS (BAY OF TINA), HE SAW NOTHING AGAINST IT. TO EXTENT SUCH ACTIVITY STRENGTHENS PEACE, IT DESERVED TO BE ENCOURAGED.
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5. UP TO NOW SIILASVUO HAS HAD NO DEFINITIVE ISRAELI REPLY. LEVINSON HAS TOLD HIM THAT GOI NOT YET READY TO REPLY, BUT THAT IT CONSIDERS SUBJECT SHOULD BE DISCUSSED IN THE JOINT COMMISSION. MAGDUB HAD EARLIER STATED THAT GOE DOES NOT WANT TO HAVE SUBJECT BROUGHT UP IN JC, SINCE AREA INQUESTION IS SOVEREIGN EGYPTIAN TERRITORY AND GOE DOES NOT FEEL OBLIGED TO DISCUSS IT WTH ISRAELIS. WHEN ISRAELIS INFORMED OF EGYPTIAN POSITION, LEVINSON OBSERVED HE DID NOT WISH TO PROPOSE A DISCUSSION IN JC UNTIL ISRAELI ANSWER WOULD BE POSIIVE. SIILASVUO SUGGESTED THAT PERHAPS THE SUBJECT MIGHT BE KEPT OFF THE AGENDA, BUT DISCUSSED INFORMALLY. THIS REMAINS POSSIBLY, BUT LEVINSON APPARENTLY OBSERVED THAT ISRAELI AUTHORITIES ARE CONCERNED THAT IF THEY ALLOW SEISMIC SURVEY, THE NEXT STEP WILL BE A REQUEST FOR OIL OPERATIONS IN THE BUFFER ZONE.

6. SIILASVUO AGREED WITH AMBASSADOR'S VIEW THAT IT IS

RESPONSIBILITY OF GOE TO OBTAIN UNEF APPROVAL FOR CONOCO ACCESS TO
BUFFER ZONE. IF SUBJECT OF CONOCO ACCESS TO ITS BUFFER ZONE
CONCESSION AREA IS RAISED, HE WILL TAKE IT UP WITH ISRAELIS TO
ASCERTAIN THEIR REACTION. SIILASVUO WONDERED WHETHER
EGYPTIANS ARE PERHAPS MAKING THEIR ABOVE-MENTIONED OFF-
SHORE WATERS REQUEST A TEST CASE. SIILASVUO WILL MEET
WITH MAGDUB ON SUNDAY AND POSSIBLY WITH GAMASY BEFORE
RETURNING TO JERUSALEM NEXT WEEK. IT IS POSSIBLE MAGDUB
MIGHT RAISE SUBJECT WITH HIM, BUT WE RATHER DOUBT IT.
IF HE DOES, SIILASVUO WILL LET US KNOW.
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